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February 5, 2009

Testimony in Support of Proposed Bill 516  
An Act Concerning Farm Wineries  
LCO No. 673

My name is Bob Duguay and I am a Connecticut small businessman and I thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.

While I am here representing only my own company, in truth I represent perhaps hundreds of Connecticut based florists and gift basket companies who each day make and deliver gifts to Connecticut residents. We all pay taxes and employ Connecticut residents. I am here to request that the legislature create *a level playing field* so that Connecticut based companies are able to compete with out of state companies that include alcoholic beverages, primarily wine, in gifts they ship to Connecticut residents. Presently, companies such as my own are prohibited by Connecticut law from doing so.

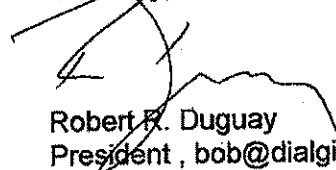
The myriad laws regarding the sale of alcohol in the 50 states creates an almost impenetrable briar patch for any company, large or small, to understand and navigate. While there are a few states that have more restrictive laws regarding the sale of alcohol than we do in Connecticut, as you all know, alcohol in all forms can be commonly purchased in grocery and convenience stores in many, many states. A large number of Connecticut residents consider our laws governing the sale of alcoholic beverages to be antiquated. Regardless, that companies located in other states can legally satisfy the desire of consumers to send gift baskets containing wine to Connecticut residents, while in state, domestic Connecticut companies are prohibited from doing so, is simply wrong.

To be sure, I want to distinguish between companies that are true wineries, regardless of where they are located, which want to sell wine they produce to the end user, and a company such as mine. My company was founded as a fruit basket company some 40+ years ago in Hamden. We combine fine foods with premium fruit and hand deliver our gifts over a wide area in Connecticut. We are neither a vineyard, nor a liquor store, and we don't aspire to be either of those. We simply want to satisfy our clients' occasional desire to include wine along with the fine foods and fruit that we typically include in our gifts. For instance, most, but not all, florists in Connecticut also make fruit baskets. Quite frankly, there are larger companies than my own in this business located in Connecticut, and Stew Leonard's of Norwalk and elsewhere is a good example. I am quite sure that they would jump at the chance to include wine along with their gifts. They have already built a liquor outlet next to their new Newington store on the Berlin Turnpike.

While I want to be able to include wine in my gifts, I don't want to compete with liquor stores or Connecticut wineries. I propose that Connecticut law be changed to permit domestic, Connecticut based companies such as my own to be legally able to purchase wine at retail price in Connecticut liquor stores and be able to place that wine in a gift. To ensure that the sale of wine be restricted as we all would want, I would propose that the retail price of any gift basket sold in Connecticut that contained wine must be, at a minimum, seven times (700%) the Connecticut retail price of the wine used in the gift and that food items must accompany the wine. This proviso would cause the retailer to create value, and prevent just any business from competing with liquor stores and/or selling wine where our communities might not want it sold. Of course, we would expect restrictions that gifts including wine be purchased only by consumers who are at least 21 years of age and that such gifts only be delivered to someone who is of legal age.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert R. Duguay  
President , bob@dialgift.com

See Attachment



**BON APPÉTIT** Show your appreciation with this generous sampling of gourmet fare. This new design contains Wine Country favorites: Brown & Haley cashew roca buttercrunch toffee, Ghirardelli dark chocolate with caramel Vignobles brie cheese spread, Bella Campagna butcher wrapped salami, Napa Valley Mustard Company stone ground dark chocolate truffles, La Patisserie de Marie crème brûlée cookies, Otis and Betty's gourmet snack mix, Lily O' cookies, Mrs. May's golden Ceylon tea, De Vita single origin 70% cocoa extra dark chocolate from Madagascar and plate. This appealing assortment, designed to impress, is now available with free shipping! **GIFT SIZE: 17" x 8" x 10"**

As of present time, **ALL** wine may be shipped to:  
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Briar Creek Cellars, Little Lakes, Steeplechase,  
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